## CHAPTER XII

### Their Diseases, Death, Mourning, Burial, and Fancies Concerning The Soul

164 Nearly all the Caribs have that disease called the sickness of
757 Naples, or as others say, yaws, which is scarcely any better. The disease is fairly common among the Negroes, and some of the French also suffer from it. It is not, however, at least not always, the responsibility of Venus, since even small children have it. To cure themselves, they do not try sweating at all, but grate shellfish, which they swallow with water. They rub themselves with genipa, or with reed leaves burned with liana, which they call mouchao or miby. They do not get well as soon as patients who are made to sweat.

●165 One sees very few other diseases among them, and it is a marvel that living such a mean life they are so healthy and fat and live so long. For it is certain that they usually live very long. It was only four or five months ago that the father of The Baron died, and his wife, The Baron's mother, still lives. The Baron, whose wife is still living, has a daughter; this daughter has a daughter and this latter already has children. So The Baron is a great-grandfather and his mother is a great-great grandmother [727] and The Baron's daughter, who is a grandmother herself, still has her own grandmother. And this is not the only example to be cited. Their long life must be attributed to their lack of cares.

751 They blame their demon for their diseases and if the illness is long and severe they call the bof'ayko to consult him about it. They
758 have a number of remedies which the women apply to the sick, but they treat the sick no more delicately than they do the healthy.

Relatives rarely or never visit their sick kin. Generally married
[784] people do not visit the sick, because, they say, their bodies emit a force which afflicts the sick even more. That is why when one of The Baron's sons was ill, neither his brother, his sisters, nor his father went to see him; only his mother treated him and she did not communicate at all with his father.

727 When some among them are killed in war, they do what they can to recover the bodies and bury them. Following is how they bury their dead.

217 The register of births includes, from the first of January, 1917, to March, [163] 1920, 70 births, of which only 38 are legitimate, with an equal num- 165 ber of children of each sex. The register of deaths mentions in the same lapse of time 48 deaths, caused by the following illnesses, whose diagnosis is perhaps slightly capricious.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dysentery | 15 | Disorders of the heart | 1 |
| Fever | 13 | " of the blood | 1 |
| Pleurisy | 4 | Accidents | 3 |
| Sunstroke | 2 | Stillborn or dead | |
| Bronchitis | 1 | shortly after birth | 8 |

These deaths are distributed as follows according to age:

| | Masculine | Feminine | | Masculine | Feminine |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Up to 3 | 14 | 11 | From 15 to 50 | 12 | 3 |
| From 3 to 15 | 2 | 3 | Over 50 | 0 | 3 |

The three women who died above the age of fifty were respectively 80, 87, and 89 years old, and in examining the last figures in the chart one notes that longevity is greater in the feminine sex than in the masculine.

835 /142/ Incestuous marriages are still frequent; they were the rule formerly; "fathers," according to Father Dutertre, "married their daughters, mothers, their sons, and the same man married two sisters 582 or the mother and the daughter. Women married at the age of seventeen or eighteen, but they are nubile younger and often have 595 children before this age. Formerly polygamy was general and the Caribs had as many as seven wives, not counting those whom they married on each island where they went often. Now that the Caribs 771 profess, at least nominally, the Catholic faith, a man has only one legitimate wife; it is true that he adds as many concubines as his [163] fortune permits him to have. Children are generally numerous; there are 8 or 9 on the average and up to 14; the number of stillbirths and the infant mortality is 11.4 per 100.

Religious ideas, according to all the ancient travellers, were very little developed among the Caribs of the Antilles and consisted [796] simply of a vague belief in a good and an evil principle, which they called manitou, but they had no word to denote God or a superior Spirit.